

PARTICIPATING IN A COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING: A CITIZEN'S GUIDE

The Jefferson County Commission is pleased to have you at our Commission meeting. We appreciate your presence, welcome your participation, and want your visit to be interesting and informative. The following is a brief summary of the Commission's Meeting Rules of Procedure that apply to citizen participation.

See the meeting agenda so that you can follow each item of business the Commission will be discussing.

SPEAKING BEFORE THE COMMISSION: WHEN CAN I TALK?

If you want to address the Commission about an issue that's not on the agenda, notice there are two places to do this. To reserve a time to speak for up to 3 minutes, please sign a speaker request form usually found near the speaker's rostrum.

The first place to speak is soon after the meeting begins. This time is reserved for citizens who want to make a request or provide input that doesn't require discussion. The spot is frequently used by citizens who don't want to stay for the entire meeting and don't need an immediate response from the Commission.

The second place is near the end of the meeting after the Commission has finished the general business part of its agenda. Again, each speaker is allotted up to 3 minutes. The Commission may enter into discussion of items brought to its attention during this segment of the meeting.

Citizens may also have a chance to address the Commission about items of interest during the General Business part of the agenda. After the Commissioners have had a chance to discuss a general business item, the Chair usually asks if there are any comments from the audience. Again, if you wish to speak, please limit remarks to no more than 3 minutes.

For the record, always give your name and address before you begin speaking. If you're representing a particular group or organization, state that, too. Always address remarks to the Chair or the Commission as a whole, never to an individual commissioner or the audience. Speakers may speak only once on an issue and may not yield their time to another person.

THE COMMON COURTESY RULE: PLEASE BE BRIEF, RELEVANT, AND ALWAYS CIVIL

Commission meetings can be long. Our Commission works hard to keep meetings moving along in a productive and civil manner. Please plan your remarks so that you can make your point clearly and quickly. Always be courteous and civil.

The Chair may call down speakers (or members of the audience) who violate the Commission's rules of decorum. Here are some "no-no's": personal attacks or threats, booing, heckling, cheering, inappropriate clapping, verbal outbursts, and distracting private conversations during proceedings. Also, signs are okay outside of the meeting room but are not allowed in it.

Commission Meeting Rules of Procedure (available at jeffersoncountyfl.gov) give the Chair control of the meeting, much like a judge controls his courtroom. These same rules also give the Chair a lot of flexibility to use his or her judgment in running an efficient and orderly meeting. So if you think you need help or more time, let the Chair know. If time allows, the Chair will usually grant reasonable requests.

Again, thanks for your interest. We're glad you're here!

NOTE: *Except for Common Courtesy rules, slightly different guidelines may apply to public hearings and workshops.*